

# Flying high

## RECORD PRICE FOR FLYING FISH THIS CHRISTMAS

by Anesta Henry

Barbadians seeking to put flying fish on their tables this Christmas will have to buy it at a record \$35 per bag of ten.

Even though fish vendors at the Bridgetown Fisheries Complex said they were shocked that the rocketing price of flying fish reached an all-time high, they said they had no choice but to sell it for that price since fishermen were selling it to them at \$250 per hundred.

Fish vendor Patricia Mapp said though some may see the price as "a bit extravagant" vendors cannot do any better at this time.

Mapp, a vendor of 30 years, told **Barbados TODAY** that she believed this was the first time in history that flying fish was being sold at \$35 per pack.



Fish vendor Patricia Mapp

She said: "I actually sold ten for \$40 as well when the season first started about two weeks ago.

"This is the first time in history that flying fish being sold so expensive because I remember

when I was 13 years old my father was also a fisherman and I remember that flying fish were selling at 100 for \$10."

Mapp sympathised with the need for fishermen to sell flying fish at \$250 per pound in order to make a profit after long hours and days at sea.

She did: "Right now, me and a gentleman had a conversation yesterday and he told me that they were saying that I am the person that have the flying fish sell for \$250. But, the fisherman is to get something.

"However we buy the fish, whether it is cheap or expensive, we should be able to get a profit and the fisherman should be able to get a li'l something too."

Another vendor said though the price for flying fish was what she described as "very hot", customers were still buying them, especially hotels, restaurants and Barbadians living abroad.

Nevertheless, the vendor said she was hoping the price dropped soon so that everybody could be able to afford "the Bajan delicacy".

"The price very hot but the flying fish selling. The restaurants and the hotels buying them up

and we know them could afford to do that cause them making back that money from the guests.

"But really and truly, most of the fish expensive right now. Everything right now is like \$9 a pound and the sword fish is \$10 and shark is normally about \$5," the vendor said.

A fisherman who said he returned to the island today with a limited 300 flying fish after 12 days at sea explained to **Barbados TODAY** that the reality stands that the fish was scarce making it difficult to catch them.

He said that flying fish was sold within a matter of minutes when he returned around 7 a.m.

"We had vendors waiting to buy the flying fish. Within five minutes time them did gone. And as you could see the women ain't got any out here now so you know the flying fish isn't staying in the market long. But, it is a delicacy and you pay for the delicacy.

"But there is a possibility that it would get better according to the catch. We still getting a supply of the other types of fish but the flying fish ain't coming like one time," the fisherman, who did not give his name, said.

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# BHTA boss buoyant on tourism outlook

by Marlon Madden

A leading tourism official said today he remains upbeat about the industry's performance despite a tough year and a number of lingering issues that continue to pose a threat.

He pleaded with Government to act to curb littering, improve timely garbage collection and strengthen safety and security.

Chairman of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) Stephen Austin said he was aware new garbage trucks arrived on the island recently and more were scheduled to come "soon", but said garbage collection was still too slow.

He said: "I am pleading with Government and the sanitation service to do all that is possible to clean up the pile of garbage all around Barbados."

He pointed out that in some neighbourhoods on the south coast the garbage had not been collected for up to four weeks.

Austin said: "This is not good. People are walking the streets and seeing the garbage really is not good for our tourism product.

"It is especially bad in some areas and in some cases it is reported that the actual garbage cans can't hold them so it is on the streets now. This is unhealthy and unsightly and we need to fix the national problem. I wonder if it is a case of poor scheduling in some areas."

Austin pledged the BHTA's support, saying he remained hopeful that the condition would soon improve and the association would do what it could to help including its annual clean up campaign.

While suggesting that the time had come for a national waste management initiative, Austin also called on Barbadians to stop littering, stating that "if we teach this in schools I believe the children will call out parents and call out adults that litter".

Austin urged all industry workers to design programmes for their communities to help with the issue of waste management and recycling.



Chairman of the BHTA Stephen Austin

In relation to safety and security, the BHTA official said there has been tremendous progress with the improvements in lighting and CCTV cameras along the tourist belts, but said there continued to be an unacceptable level of visitor harassment and gun related crimes.

Pointing out that the "characters" committing the offences were known, Austin said often when they were released they would return and do the same thing in the same location.

The BHTA official recommended that law enforcement officials find a way to "impede" those individuals by banning them from the locations and providing rehabilitation.

"It is frustrating to have an establishment trying to attract visitors to our island and locals, but they do not feel safe. The BHTA will continue to lobby Government and work with all of our stakeholders," said Austin.

"We also suggest the need to have a specific tourism taskforce in the entertainment areas of the tourism industry. Until we are serious about it we are going to have no change," he said, adding that there was a need for more uniformed policemen to be stationed in the St Lawrence Gap area.

Despite those lingering concerns, officials said they were satisfied with several improvements this year that they believed helped to cement the island's favourable performance thus far.

Austin said he was especially pleased with the upgrades at the GAIA, but said he was eagerly looking forward to the planned expansion and further improvements, as well as a reduction in the waiting time to

collect checked luggage.

Chief Executive Officer of the BHTA Rudy Grant said although this year could be considered a tough one with many uncertainties including the Brexit development and US and China trade wars, the local tourism sector performed well.

Delivering his administrative review to the audience, which included Minister of Tourism Kerrie Symmonds, Grant said "as we contemplate the challenges ahead and we reflect on the last quarter performance there is a lot for us to be satisfied about".

"Our tourism arrival numbers continue to improve. There has been growth in long stay visitor arrivals of [almost] five per cent for the period January to September 2019. We are anticipating that we will continue to perform better in 2020," said Grant.

Barbados welcomed 522,883 visitors, a 4.2 per cent increase or 21,200 more long-stay tourists for the first nine months of this year, compared to same period last year.

Grant said hoteliers continued to notice "a lot more last-minute bookings, which change the projections in a significantly positive way".

"While we anticipate that our industry will continue to expand in 2020, we cannot however be complacent, and we must be determined to work even harder.

"Sometimes I know we become frustrated at the pace with which issues seem to progress, but we must never tire," advised Grant.

With the island scheduled to host a number of events next year in relation to the planned **We Gatherin' 2020** campaign, which should attract a large number of Barbadians from the diaspora, Grant said the BHTA would also be doing what it could to help drive arrival numbers and spend.

"The BHTA has developed a marketing programme called **20 in 2020**, where participating members have been requested to offer discount during the 2020 year of at least 20 per cent for direct bookings," he said, adding that to date 25 members had confirmed their participation.

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People awaiting the start of the distribution of food hampers at the Salvation Army's Reed Street headquarters this morning.

In order to meet the needs of the growing number of people approaching the church for help, Major Wilkinson said he was hopeful that this year's Christmas and Letter Appeal reach its \$700,000 target. The Army raised \$500 less than its \$650,000 Christmas and Letter Appeal target last year.

He told reporters: "[The money] will be used for all our feeding programmes and our hostel. Our hostel, we could say that's a liability because it doesn't bring money in per se, so it is almost a free programme.

"Also we have our back to school programme that we use some of those funds for. Then persons come during the year and we have a food pantry where we help them. Then we have our mentorship programme."

Those who attended the service heard musical selections from the Royal Barbados Police Force Band, heard a retelling of the Nativity story, and received season's greetings from Dame Sandra.

The Governor General said: "Certainly on my behalf, on behalf of my personal family I would want to say a very special Christmas to all of you.

"And as Major Wilkinson said, despite the fact that you might not be as fortunate as other persons, God loves you and always will."

The Salvation Army hosts its annual Christmas luncheon for the needy on December 20, while the children's party is to be held next Wednesday. (AH)